

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 CCO-00 /031 R

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INFO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 226116

EXDIS/TOSEC 184

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CASC

SUBJECT: RELEASE OF U.S. CITIZEN PRISONERS FROM CUBA

REF: STATE 225805, TOSEC 131

1. ON OCTOBER 9 CUBAN AUTHORITIES INFORMED SENATORS PELL AND JAVITS THROUGH THE CZECH EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON THAT THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT INTENDED TO RELEASE FOUR AMERICANS AS A GESTURE OF GOOD WILL TO THE SENATORS. THE CUBANS EXCLUDED THE USG FROM THE GESTURE.

2. WE MIGHT TAKE A MINOR STEP NOW TO SHOW THAT WE ARE AT LEAST LISTENING AND RESPONSIVE. ONE LIMITED ACTION WHICH COULD WELL SERVE THIS PURPOSE WOULD BE TO GRANT A VISA TO CUBAN THEOLOGIAN SERGIO ARCE MARTINEZ TO ATTEND THE SAN FRANCISCO CONVENTION OF THE LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION IN MID-NOVEMBER. SCHOLARS AND EXPERTS SUCH AS ARCE ARE NOT NOW AMONG THE FOUR CATEGORIES OF CUBANS GENERALLY ELIGIBLE FOR TRAVEL HERE --- DELEGATIONS TO THE UN, DELEGATIONS TO OFFICIAL INTERGOVERNMENTAL CONFERENCES, OLYMPIC-CALIBER SPORTS DELEGATIONS, INDIVIDUALS WITH HUMANITARIAN CONSIDERATIONS. THIS ACTION IS DESIGNED TO
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HAVE PRACTICALLY NO DOMESTIC POLITICAL IMPACT AND AT THE

SAME TIME BE COMMUNICATIVE AND READ IN HAVANA.

3. THE LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION IS A REPUTABLE PROFESSIONAL SCHOLARLY ORGANIZATION. MANY MEMBERS DISAGREE WITH OUR CUBA POLICY. I HAVE RECEIVED SEVERAL PETITIONS IN ARCE'S BEHALF AND I BELIEVE ANY POSITIVE ACTION ON OUR PART IN THIS CASE WOULD QUICKLY COME TO THE ATTENTION OF CUBAN AUTHORITIES.

4. PRO EXCEPTION: (1) THIS RESPONSE MAY ENCOURAGE THE CUBANS TO MAKE ADDITIONAL GESTURES TO IMPROVE RELATIONS. (2) NO ACTION ON OUR PART MIGHT BE INTERPRETED BY THE CUBANS AS A LACK OF INTEREST. (3) THIS STEP WOULD IN ITSELF BE OF A SUITABLY LIMITED NATURE AND NEED NOT CONSTITUTE A PRECEDENT FOR ANY OTHER VISA APPLICANT TO SAY NOTHING OF BROADER OR MORE SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN U.S. POLICY.

5. CON EXCEPTION: (1) IT COULD BE TAKEN BY OUR OAS PARTNERS AS AN INDICATION THAT WE ARE MOVING ON OUR OWN OUTSIDE THE OAS BEFORE THE NOVEMBER 8 QUITO MEETING TO IMPROVE BI-LATERAL RELATIONS. (HOWEVER, WE WOULD PROPOSE TO SAY A WORD ABOUT THIS BEFOREHAND TO BRAZIL AND PERHAPS TO OTHER COUNTRIES.) (2) THE EXCEPTION, DEPENDING ON THE WAY IT BECOMES PUBLIC, COULD FUEL SPECULATION OF EARLY CUBA POLICY CHANGES BY THE U.S.

6. RECOMMENDATION: THAT WE GRANT AN EXCEPTION TO OUR GENERAL VISA POLICY FOR CUBANS IN THE CASE OF ARCE AND SO INFORM THE LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION. WE WOULD NOT PROPOSE A PUBLIC STATEMENT TO THIS EFFECT. IN RESPONSE TO ANY PRESS INQUIRIES, WE WOULD MERELY NOTE THAT AN EXCEPTION HAD BEEN MADE IN THIS CASE. AS STATED IN STATE 225983 (TOSEC 152), THIS PROPOSAL IS ENDORSED BY L AND SCA. INGERSOLL

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